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TO: Sen. Steve Cassano and Rep. Jason Rojas, Chairmen,
And the Members of the Planning and Development Committee
FROM: Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

RE: Public Hearing

DATE: February 13, 2013

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut is the statewide, non-profit coalition of river organizations, individuals, and businesses formed to protect and enhance Connecticut's waters by promoting sound water policies, uniting and strengthening the state's many river groups, and educating the public about the importance of water stewardship. Our 500 members include almost all of the state's river and watershed conservation groups, representing many thousand Connecticut residents.

SB 705, AA Expanding Powers of Municipal Stormwater Authorities (in favor).

This concept bill has a different title but uses the same language as House Bill 5477 (AA Providing Stormwater Authorities with Certain Corporate Powers). Both bills have distinguished sponsors. Both bills aim to give state stormwater utilities the means to establish predictable revenue, based on use, and the flexibility to provide incentives for reducing stormwater runoff.

Rivers Alliance has participated in many, many meetings and workshops over a dozen years addressing how municipalities can manage stormwater so as to minimize negative effects on the state's waters. A variety of models and programs have been considered. The most effective appears to be a utility model, similar to water and wastewater utilities. This model has been espoused by Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound for a number of years, and has gradually emerged as the model of choice for Connecticut. CFE has provided detailed, extremely helpful testimony on Bill 705.

Stormwater in our region is by some measures the chief cause of contamination of upland streams, major rivers, and, of course, Long Island Sound. It is frequently filthy with animal waste, motor oil, pesticides, and debris. As storms become more extreme, town public works crews cannot keep up with the mess. Effective stormwater utilities are much needed, and we hope that this legislation will help expand their use beyond the present pilot programs to all towns and cities. Of course, the cost of controlling and cleaning stormwater can be minimized by encouraging protective buffers of natural vegetation. (But you know that.)


HB 5725, AAC The Statewide Phosphorus Reduction Plan (opposed).

This bill appears to be asking for a do-over of Section 1 of Public Act 12-155 (AAC Phosphorus Reduction in State Waters), which reads:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, or the commissioner's designee and the chief elected officials of the cities of Danbury, Meriden and Waterbury and the towns of Cheshire, Southington and Wallingford, and the chief elected official of any other municipality impacted by the state-wide strategy to reduce phosphorus, or such chief elected officials' designees, shall collaboratively evaluate and make recommendations regarding a state-wide strategy to reduce phosphorus loading in inland nontidal waters in order to comply with standards established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Such evaluation and recommendations shall include (1) a state-wide response to address phosphorus nonpoint source pollution, (2) approaches for municipalities to use in order to comply with standards established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for phosphorus, including guidance for treatment and potential plant upgrades, and (3) the proper scientific methods by which to measure current phosphorous levels in inland nontidal waters and to make future projections of phosphorous levels in such waters.

This 2012 Act requires a collaborative evaluation of statewide phosphorus management (which seems to be the same as what is proposed in RB 5725, which is before you.) In PA 12-155, *all* impacted towns are invited to participate. The language was painstakingly negotiated with a range of stakeholders, including municipalities, environmental groups, and agencies. The mandated process is already underway. We urge the Committee to let that process go forward, and to reject RB 5725.

Thank you very much for your attention. We would be happy to help in any way if the committee so wishes.


Margaret Miner,
Executive Director